

Thank you Vice-President Whelehan for that kind introduction, and I'm glad to be able to return here, to McQuaid, for my final State of the County Address. I have many fond memories of the halls here and I remember many of my lessons and the values they instilled.

Values that I'm proud to say have guided me through my career and my years as County Executive. And central to those beliefs is that the strength and future of Monroe County has always and will always rest with the fine people who choose to make their lives and raise their families here.

Thurgood Marshall, the late Supreme Court justice, once said, "We must never forget that the only real source of power we can tap is the respect of the people." Justice Marshall was right but we can go further and say that the true power to change our community rests with the people who make their lives here. Our role in government is to allow them to innovate and build our future. And, Monroe County has always been home to those innovators — people who worked diligently to bring forth new ideas, better themselves, and us as well.

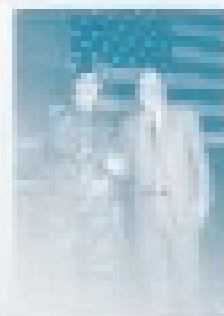
Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony, among many others, are pillars of inspiration within our history that prove that the power to change our society rests within all of us. However, names like Douglass and Anthony, along with those of Eastman, Bausch and Gleason also make us question: Has our time passed and what is the future of Monroe County?

The answer is both simple and daunting. Our future rests on ensuring that the people of Monroe County have the ability to turn their ideas and dreams into reality. Because the new ideas that will lead to a brighter tomorrow, create jobs and provide prosperity for our families don't exist only in the Halls of Government. Many of these ideas, and certainly the best of them, rest with the people that we serve. Therefore, we in government should always encourage individual initiative and responsibility. And, fight for the priorities of the people.

Tonight, I'm proud to stand here and say through stable taxes and smaller more efficient and innovative government — my administration has done just that.

Many of our accomplishments, both large and small, have been readily apparent in improving our community. We worked together with the City and Eastman Kodak to build and complete Frontier Field, a beautiful sports facility for the community.

We worked together with our economic development partners to bring JetBlue, AirTran and significantly lower fares to our community.





We worked together with the City and many agencies such as the Red Cross, the Salvation Army and local utility companies to create a new emergency operations center to deal with crises like the recent ice storm.

We worked together with our towns to preserve over 1200 environmentally sensitive acres, permanently protecting them from development.

We worked together with crime victim advocacy groups to create the Crime Victims Resource Center in Corn Hill and the Crime Victims Memorial in Highland Park.

And, we worked together to provide new leadership and revitalize the GRVA, the Transit Authority and the County Water Authority.

And, today with the Visitor's Association we've provided a new funding stream for the community branding campaign – Rochester: Made for Living – to promote our entire region.

These accomplishments are important because they demonstrate that good government isn't about building monuments to your legacy. It's about getting projects completed and organizations on a single agenda for the benefit of the overall community. We have also enacted fundamental changes to improve Monroe County's future.

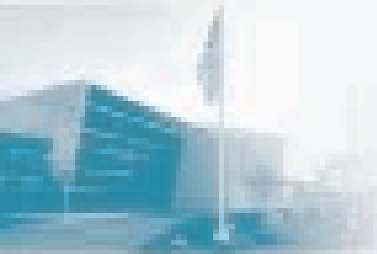
It's no accident that we are the only upstate community that is experiencing real and substantial growth. As our neighbors struggle, we have swum against the tide in New York and successfully enacted policies that encourage job creation and economic expansion.

I have delivered 9 straight budgets that have kept faith with our taxpayers by holding the line on property taxes. In fact, we provided this community with its largest tax cut ever in 1999, and County spending today is actually lower than when I took office. Most importantly, the County tax rate today is 25% lower than it was two decades ago.

And, in addition to providing a real stimulus for job creation through stable taxes, we have created incentive programs to help employers provide paychecks for thousands of local families. Over 44,000 jobs, including 5,600 in the last year alone, have been created or kept in our community due to our economic development efforts — including the Monroe fund, our region's first venture capital fund.

Our efforts have kept Monroe County vibrant while we absorbed layoffs from our largest traditional employers.

Last year, when I said we're about JobsFirst, I meant it — And,



while there is still more work to be done, we've proven that we are more than a one-company town and that we will continue to grow and improve our economic future. To hold the line on taxes and create new jobs, we have worked far ahead of the curve.

Tonight, as we gather here our County is in the midst of a remarkable transformation. We are restoring hope and dignity to thousands of our friends and neighbors by fundamentally changing how we help families in need. This effort, called Operation Transform, embraces the belief that everyone regardless of where they stand today can achieve success and help us build a stronger community.

Operation Transform creates one department of Human and Health Services for the lean and efficient delivery of services by combining all or part of five former county departments. Operation Transform also insists upon personal responsibility. That those able to work, look for work, and that those in the midst of addiction fight, and seek treatment, to regain control of their lives.

When I unveiled this effort, our critics were quick to rise up and say that the system can't be changed. That people could not break free from the cycle of dependency. That there is no way that we would save taxpayers \$30 million this year while lifting families up and out of welfare.

Well, the fact is our critics are wrong.

Due to our efforts over 1,800 people this year have already found jobs freeing their families from welfare and earning themselves and their children the opportunity to fulfill their dreams. And, in just the first six months we've saved \$23 million — helping us keep taxes stable and more families working and out of poverty.

But, again I know our work is not done and that the bureaucracy of our welfare system will not easily be replaced by a new structure that restores hope and defends taxpayers. But we will finish the job because our goals are just and our plan to meet them is right.

And, not only have we kept our families working and helped others reach out of poverty and regain their dignity – we have protected our neighborhoods and kept our streets safe.

Under my administration, we've committed more resources than ever before to Public Safety, a record \$136 million in 2003. And, we've created partnerships that are without parallel in our state bringing together resources from every corner of our county for the safety of our entire community.





Together with our firefighters and the EMS community, the FAA, the City and Monroe Community College — we created a state-of-the-art Public Safety Training Facility, the only one of its kind in the Northeast United States.

And, together with Sheriff Meloni and Sheriff O’Flynn we solved the decades old problem of severe overcrowding by building a new jail and additional beds at our Henrietta Correctional Facility.

Also, we are one of only three pilot communities working with the Centers for Disease Control to construct the Health Alert Network or HAN.

HAN links hospitals and first responders with the public safety resources at all levels of government to protect our residents from a biological outbreak or attack.

Whether its dealing with new threats or the traditional scourge of crime, Monroe County has been at the forefront of working with our State, towns, villages and our City to protect the safety of our neighborhoods. This safety is essential because it allows people to invest in their homes, raise their families and start new businesses without the fear that crime will devastate what they’ve worked so hard to build.

Stable taxes, new jobs, safer neighborhoods and new hope for those in need.

These accomplishments strengthen the foundation upon which our future will be built. However, despite these successes, the effects of our work can’t be felt in every corner of our community.

Our City still struggles, but we need to continue to work together to make Rochester’s unsafe streets safer, control City taxes and improve its failing schools. When we as a community know that 75% of our children who enter City high schools never graduate, we must act aggressively.

That fact is startling – even more so when you consider the effect of this educational divide on the ability of City children to thrive and participate in our economic future.

However, we continue to do our part for education.

Monroe County has provided school districts with nearly a half billion dollars in additional revenue over the past decade. And, not only must we be concerned about education in our City, we must also be concerned about crime, especially juvenile crime.



There is no doubt that crime remains a problem in our City. That is why I have supported many initiatives to address this critical issue, including our plans for a juvenile justice center to keep our youthful offenders here in our community so they can be rehabilitated.

The problem of crime is fundamental to Rochester's future. We must continue to work together and search for solutions to solve this scourge. We know people will not choose to build their lives, raise their families and create jobs where they know they are not safe.

While challenges to Rochester include failing schools and the fear of crime, we must also face the issue of rising City taxes.

Property taxes for City homeowners have increased by over 38% in just the last ten years. These tax hikes harm the dreams of those seeking to buy a first home, raise the burden on renters and hurt seniors struggling to stay in their family home.

In total, this combination of rising taxes, failing schools, and increased crime are of great concern to young families who are deciding where they want to raise their children.

And, as a City resident, who has raised my family there and loves the vibrancy it has to offer – I continue to fear its decline and know that the answer doesn't lie in false promises or grandiose schemes. However, answers do exist and we've all seen them work.

New York City was once thought of as beaten — a metropolis that had seen its best days – destined for decline.

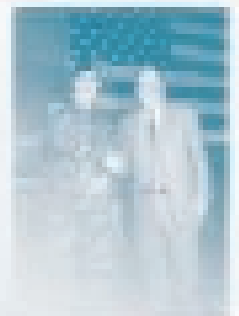
Then there was Rudy Guiliani – a Mayor who understood that to encourage new ideas and new initiative you had to ensure that crime and high taxes wouldn't destroy what innovators create. His solution was simple. He was a hands-on leader who focused on every problem — big and small. And, he applied concrete solutions while cutting taxes by \$2.5 billion. And, it worked.

New York today even after the tragedy of 9/11 is evidence of that.

Our City – Rochester — needs the same kind of thinking and effective, hands-on leadership that is dedicated to our families and our innovators that will build our future.

We can rebuild Rochester, but we need to focus on concrete solutions rather than simply seeking to export the City's problems to other areas of our community.

However, our entire county must play a role in delivering those





solutions. And, we have.

My administration has brought over 1,200 County workers back downtown and successfully fought to keep the Appellate Courthouse in Rochester. This courthouse has been in Rochester since 1894 and I was determined not to allow this important court to leave Rochester for Buffalo.

Most importantly, Monroe County through the sales tax has provided over \$1 billion over the past decade to the City of Rochester and its residents.

In fact, I worked with the Mayor to enact the dollar-parity agreement that ensures that the City and the County receive exactly the same amount of Sales Tax revenue - an agreement we just renewed. This kind of cooperation has been central to my dealings not only with our City, but with our towns and villages as well.

I brought the Mayor, along with our Supervisors and village Mayors together to create the Council of Governments.

Today, Monroe County has more than 375 agreements with our City, towns, villages and school districts to share resources and provide everything from fresh water to civil service exams for our residents.

In fact, when Erie County researched their consolidation initiative they called Monroe County. Why did they call Monroe County? Because we've done it!

By joining together as equal partners we have saved our taxpayers millions of dollars and improved the delivery of services — all while preserving the uniqueness of our City, towns and villages.

And, I want to thank all those here tonight who joined me in this effort – one that was truly from the bottom up and not the top down.

For it is the uniqueness of our City, towns and villages that sustains the strength of Monroe County. From the rural beauty of Rush to the Greece waterfront to the history of Fairport to the excitement of our City — each of us chooses to live where we do for good reason and it's that diversity that makes us strong.

We should never give that up for the false promises of metrogovernment.

We should never be fooled into thinking that the authoritarian idea of centralized planning by bureaucrats in ivory towers can replace local governments run by neighbors for the benefit of their community.



This difference is not personal or political — it is a fundamental philosophical difference.

To embrace the false utopia of metrogovernment is to abandon faith in the people who choose to make their lives and raise their families here. We should always believe, as history has taught us, that all people have the ability to overcome any problem or meet any challenge given the opportunity — and government should not stand in their way.

My administration hasn't stood in the way. I will always believe in the people of our community, and I've been proud to serve them.

Together, because of our efforts, Monroe County is stronger today than it was a nearly a decade ago.

Our taxes are lower, our economy is more diverse, our neighborhoods are safer, our social services system more compassionate, and our environment better protected. Our lives are richer and our families are stronger. We have done our part to ensure the future of this community.

Yes, we will face economic challenges. And, we may sometimes doubt ourselves and worry about what's to come.

However, we only need to look at our past, both distant and recent, to see the great things we've accomplished. And, to know that Monroe County will always be home to a brighter future. Because we are the authors of that future. As long as we rejoice in our freedom and take the opportunities that lie before us, we will continue to build a Monroe County upon which the sun will never set.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to play a role in building our community's future. God bless you and God Bless this great County.

